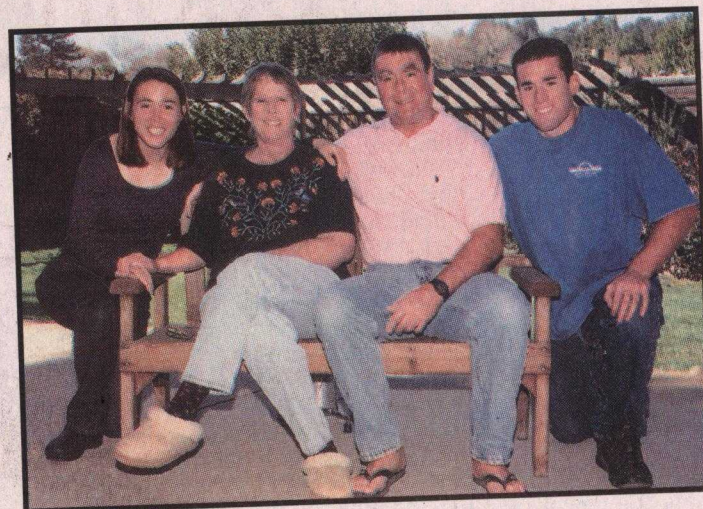


LEAVING *on her* OWN TERMS

HOSPICE HELPS ONE OF ITS OWN



ABOVE: Hospice nurse Lupita Mock joins the Yule family by Viola Yule's bedside hours before the 57-year-old woman succumbs to cancer.
TOP: Viola, second from left, is surrounded by daughter Amy, husband Philip and son Micheil as they pose for a family photo a few days before Viola faints in the shower and is subsequently bedridden.

Hospice

12.14.03

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Hospice

Story and photos by Shmuel Thaler

Sentinel staff photographer

Editor's note: Staff photographer Shmuel Thaler documented the final days of the life of Soquel resident Viola Yule in hospice care. Yule was formerly a hospice-care administrator.

SOQUEL

Viola Yule wants to be sure that "Waiting on an Angel" by Ben Harper is played at her memorial service.

She sits in her garden, surrounded by her family and the purple and blue flowers that share her name, and talks about how she wants her service to be.

Viola, 57, has lived with cancer for 15 years.

She knew this day would come.

But it is hard for her children, Amy, 25, and Micheil, 21, who alternate between laughter and tears.

They talk about family trips to the Grand Canyon and Morocco.

Then they talk about the songs Viola wants at her memorial.

Viola's husband, Philip, is there, along with her pastors, Jan Landry and Cathie Jarosz. Philip is the one who brings the conversation back from trips to Viola's memorial. He worries that some important detail will be overlooked; that the last thing he will do for her will somehow go wrong.

Viola sits quietly.

"Some of my earliest memories are going to chemotherapy appointments with my mom," Micheil remembers. His mother's breast cancer was just part of the package that came with Viola's vibrant presence.

Two years ago, the mother of two retired from her job as an administrator for the county of Santa Cruz and found a passion helping the Hospice Caring Project of Santa Cruz County get its financial house in order. But it

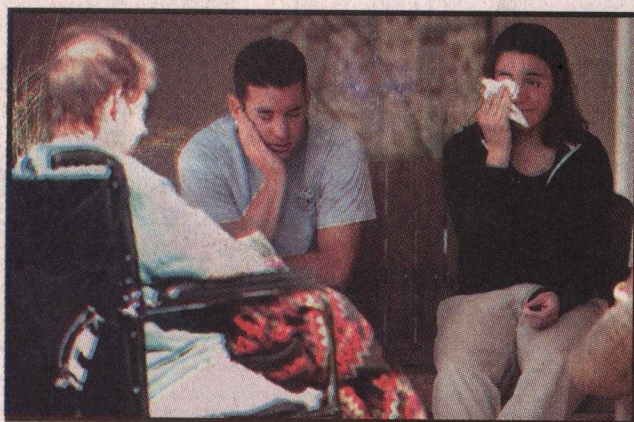
See **YULE** on **PAGE A20**



ABOVE: Before being immobilized by her illness, Viola is flanked by her older sisters, Valerie Warnke and Virginia Yant, as they create the baby book Viola never had.



ABOVE: Viola's husband Philip wheels her toward the fresh air of the Yule's backyard patio.



LEFT: Micheil and Amy discuss funeral arrangements with their mother.

*'Viola arrived on our doorstep as a gift.
She transformed our Hospice house into a home.'*

TREE DUNBAR, HOSPICE COLLEAGUE



Shmuel Thaler/Sentinel photos

Viola Yule is comforted as her death nears by Hospice nurse Lupita Mock.

Yule

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it was the humanity and caring that became her legacy at Hospice.

"Viola arrived on our doorstep as a gift," says Hospice colleague Tree Dunbar. "She transformed our Hospice house into a home."

Less than three months ago, though, Viola stopped being a staff member. Now she is a client.

Viola knows what to do. She has begun the process of tying up the loose ends of her life and gaining closure.

A group of women in their 20s stops by to hug Viola one last time, remembering how she doted over them for seven years when she was their scout leader.

Amy answers the phone, which rings almost nonstop with calls from Viola's friends and family hoping to make one last visit and get an update on her failing health.

"It's Viola's time to reap all of the love and kindness she had sown," says Catherine Flaxman, a close friend of Viola's for more than 30 years.

Later, her sisters Valerie Warnke and Virginia Yant will come to help Viola clean out her closet. This is what Viola wants. To make it easier on her family when she is gone.

Valerie holds up a blue T-shirt emblazoned with a yellow spiral design on the front.

"What size is it?" Viola asks.

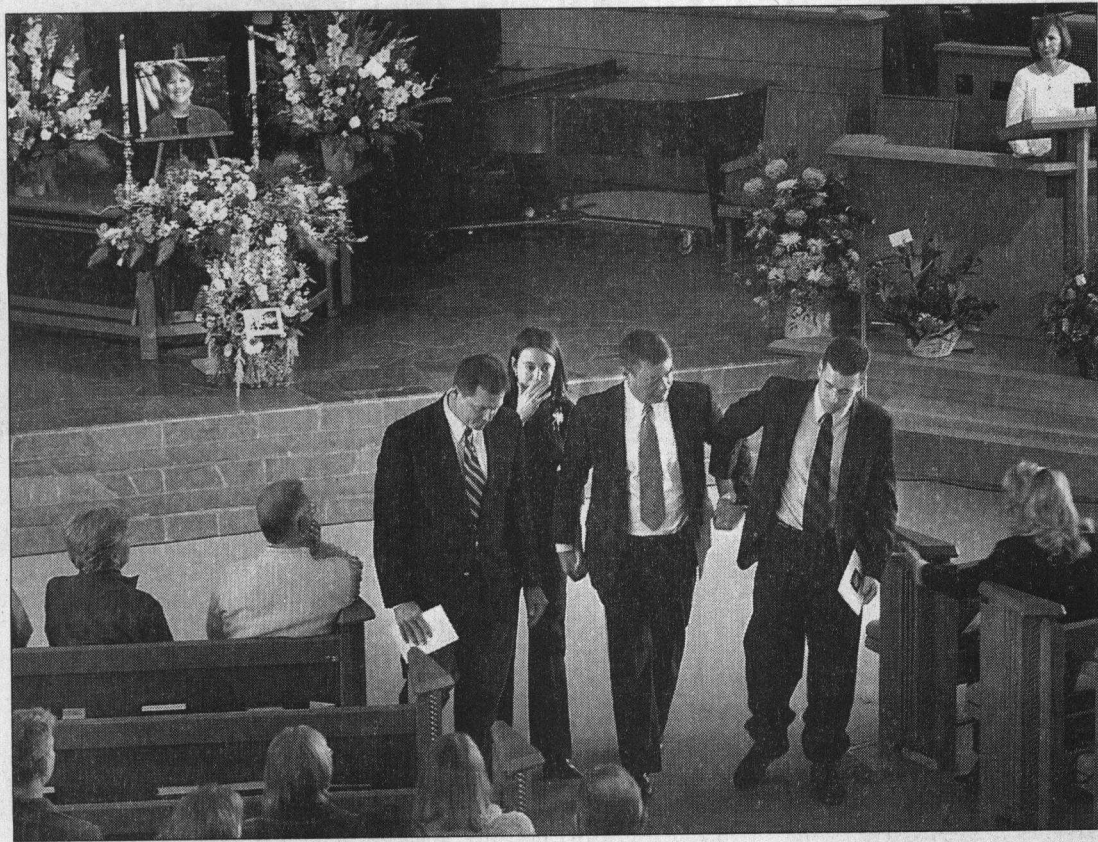
When Valerie tells her it is a large, Yule says, "Save it for Phil."

Some of her clothes will stay with Phil and her family, while some pieces will be donated to charity.

"Someone should make use of these," Viola says.

Virginia and Valerie push Viola's wheelchair into the Yule's living room, where hundreds of family photos from her childhood are spread out across a large oak table.

"They're making me a baby book," Viola says with a smile.



Yule's photograph provides the backdrop as funeral director Vince Azzaro, left, escorts Amy, Philip and Micheil Yule from Viola's memorial service at the First Congregational Church in Santa Cruz on Nov. 23, 12 days after Viola's death. Hospice pastor Jan Landry looks on, top right.

End-of-Life Coalition receives national award

SENTINEL STAFF REPORT

The Santa Cruz County End-of-Life Coalition was awarded the first Rallying Points' Community Coalition Award of Excellence last week by the Robert Wood Johnson Founda-

tion. The \$15,000 national award recognizes the coalition's partnerships with local nursing homes as part of a community-wide effort to improve care for the terminally ill.

Salima Cobb, director and founder of the coalition and the community liaison for Hospice Caring Project, recently returned from Boston, where

she accepted the award on behalf of the group, at the second annual Rallying Points National Conference.

"Our programs are really about quality of life at the end," said Cobb. "After all, death and dying is a natural part of life. Unfortunately, as a society, we are often reluctant to talk about it. We aim to break down those taboos by getting people to talk in individual and community discussions. This funding will make a tremendous difference."

In its third year, the coalition has more than 80 members, representing more than 30 regional and local organizations and institutions. Hospice Caring Project of Santa Cruz

County and Dominican Hospital are the two major sponsors of the coalition.

The Rallying Points award, coupled with a \$10,000 grant from the Community Foundation of Santa Cruz County, will enable the coalition's Skilled Nursing Facility Task Force to develop and refine end-of-life care policies and procedures in six of the county's nursing homes.

"We are delighted to be working with the End-of-Life Coalition's skilled nursing task force on this project in support of our residents, their families and our staff," said Ruth Cusick, director of nursing at Driftwood Skilled Nursing Facility in Santa Cruz.

Viola's wheelchair into the Yule's living room, where hundreds of family photos from her childhood are spread out across a large oak table.

"They're making me a baby book," Viola says with a smile.

As the youngest in her family, her mother didn't have time to make Viola a proper one as a child.

Now, in the last moments of her life, she will have one.

As the disease progresses over the weeks to come, clear plastic oxygen tubes begin to crisscross the Yule's home, and the tanks that provide Viola with oxygen becomes her constant

the terminally ill.

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companion. One day she is posing jovially for a family photo and the next evening she faints in the shower.

Philip, Micheil and Amy lay her gently on the mattress.

Viola will never get up from the bed again.

Viola opens her large brown eyes and struggles to speak. Philip gently strokes her hand

as she mumbles a few unintelligible syllables.

Micheil and Amy tell their mother to rest as they sit beside the hospital bed that dominates their parents' bedroom. Then, with supreme effort, the 57-year-old Soquel women clearly pronounces the word "last."

A few hours later, her word will become truth.

Viola takes her last breath. And now, the day has come.

Hospice Caring Project's Center for Grief & Loss provides ongoing individual and group bereavement support to anyone in the community who is grieving the death of a loved one. For information, call 688-7684.